**About Vidya Sagar:**

Vidya Sagar is an organisation based in Chennai, Tamil Nadu. The organization was set up in 1985 by a parent of a person with profound disability. It works towards enabling potential, demystifying disabilities and partnering and empowering persons with disabilities. The focus of our work is with children and adults with multiple disabilities.

Since its inception, each year has seen the evolving of new programs suited to meet local conditions and the changing needs of the disability sector. We run several programs focusing on early intervention, special education, inclusion, therapy, communication and vision training, co-curricular and leisure activities, counseling, livelihood training, exploring and creating employment opportunities and training of resource persons. We also work with mental health. Currently, in a year 4000 persons with disabilities from varying socio economic and literacy backgrounds, from various parts of India and neighboring countries benefit from our technical expertise through direct and community based programs.

We are a rights based organization, advocating for the rights of persons with disabilities. Our team in the Disability Legislation Unit run by persons with disability has been impacting laws, policies and programs at the state and national level.

Vidya Sagar’s strength lies in technical expertise in rehabilitation and working for disability rights to be met. To recognize this we network with human rights groups and other technical institutes in and around our countries.

We have received three National Awards and the India NGO Award for outstanding services in the field of disability.

**MISSION**

*We focus on*

• Persons with cerebral palsy, multiple disabilities, no matter how profoundly affected, and

other disabilities, where facilities are inaccessible

• Their families and communities they live in

• Demystification, independence and inclusion

*We believe*

• In the right to equality of opportunity

• In the right to make informed choices and so meet one’s individual needs

• That disability is a development and a human rights issue

*We value*

• Differences

• Collective initiative

• The spirit and positive attitude we bring to our work each day

*Our Motto*:

Positive & Proactive

**Rationale:**

The quality of our services and work rests primarily on the staff and professionals that work directly with the person with disabilities. The staffs that work in Vidya Sagar are aware of the latest techniques and thinking that is prevalent in our country and abroad and use it creatively in their work.

This is made possible because as an organization we recognize and attempt to meet the intellectual needs of our staff members. We also recognize that the disability field in our country has very few professionals. Our Post Graduate Diploma Course which started way back in 1990 was an attempt to train good special educators who would work with persons with disability. This course, “Post Graduate Diploma in Special Education; Multiple Disabilities (Physical & Neurological)”, is affiliated to the University of Madras and recognized by Rehabilitation Council of India. We also offer Continuous Rehabilitation Education (CRE) courses recognized by Rehabilitation Council of India.

### With India being a signatory to the United Nation Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

(UNCRPD) and the disability movement forging ahead we recognize that we need to offer many more courses in the area of disability.

Our HRD department looks at training and development of resource people, in a four pronged manner:

1. long term courses
2. Short term courses which can further be divided into
3. CRE courses and
4. Need based workshops / courses
5. Research and development
6. In house staff capacity building

Long term courses; 1 - 2 year courses:

We are in the process of changing our Post Graduate Diploma Course in multiple disabilities to a 2 year

B. ED in multiple disabilities. This has been mandated by Rehabilitation Council of India and we are confident of completing all the required specifications to offer the course in the next academic year (2016 – 2017).

We also propose to work on developing a curriculum and then offering a course for professionals who can work in the field of Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR). The need for this came up when we were looking to hire people who could work in the community with persons with disabilities. Unfortunately, there are very few professionals trained in the area of Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR). Our search for courses in this area also showed that no certified course was available in our country. This seemed a little out of sync - considering the philosophy of CBR and the strong push towards working in the community, both by the government and the NGO’s.

We have already developed a Transdisciplinary course for rehabilitation professionals and also been a part of the group working on the CBR mission mode that is going to be offered to the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, New Delhi.

The idea of developing this course has been one of Vidya Sagar’s priority concerns for a number of years, and therefore we have made an effort to meet with people working in the field of public health and rural development to help us develop training modules for CBR professionals.

The challenge for this course would be certification. For this we are approaching universities which offer courses in Rural Development.

Your support to develop this course would really help, as our country and region needs CBR workers; workers who know rehabilitation techniques, understand the community, are aware of government schemes and policies and most important, recognize that disability is a marginalized issue.

Short courses:

1. CRE
2. Need based courses / workshops

CRE Courses:

Vidya Sagar has been offering courses of three days to three weeks for the past 10 years. These are usually in areas of rehabilitation, particularly Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC), Inclusive Education and working with multiple disability and low vision. Rehabilitation Council of India recognizes these courses as CRE and offers certification. We would like to offer at least two courses every academic year.

Short professional enhancement course

Three years back we had developed a short course of 100 hours to be run on weekends for three months .This course was called **“**Counselor Education-Disability and Mental Health”. We offered this course to practicing counselors in the city. It’s a successful course and we will be running it again this year.

Need Based Courses:

We offer customized courses for individuals, small groups from other organizations and even some interns. The courses are very specific and vary in terms of duration; language; and content. These courses are very successful as they meet specific needs. This success can be gauged by the number of institutes that have invited Vidya Sagar to help them in areas of AAC and working with children with multiple disabilities and low vision.

Research and documentation:

This is an area that is a huge challenge for Vidya Sagar. We recognize that this has to be addressed and addressed fast. We have already started working on this.

Two year back we had a short training for our staff on Research Methodology. This led to a small study on Women with disabilities. The title of this study was “Status of Employment among Women with Disabilities”.

But more work needs to be done in the area of research and documentation.

In House Training:

This is crucial for any organization which is working in a technical area. As an organization we are aware of this and offer alteast three short in house courses conducted by experts for our staff. We also try and send our staff to present papers and attend conferences and workshops held in the country. This has proved very successful as is obvious in the quality of our work.

Conclusion:

Vidya Sagar is an organization that is working in the area of technical rehabilitation, the community, and in the area of advocacy and other related areas. We believe that our work has to have an expertise that is on par with any other country but is also relevant to our specific Indian needs.

Then it stands to reason that if you want quality work you need to be trained. And once trained you need to disseminate and share your learnings. Our HRD department attempts to do just that.

Finally, if any of the government schemes / policies / mandates, have to be successful – we need trained professionals to carry them out.

Vidya Sagar has a commitment to create good trained professionals who have technical knowledge but, are also aware of the rights of People with Disability whether they stay in the village, slum, small city or a metro.